



## Update: Public Health Message Regarding Anthrax

October 12, 2001

- Preliminary testing done at CDC along with clinical diagnosis indicates that an employee who works on the third floor at 30 Rockefeller Plaza has developed cutaneous anthrax, a bacterial infection of the skin. The source of the anthrax exposure is still being investigated, but it is possible that it may have occurred when an envelope was opened on September 25, 2001 that may have contained material contaminated with the spore-form of anthrax. The employee developed a skin infection and was seen by an infectious disease specialist who suspected cutaneous anthrax. The patient has been treated with antibiotics and is doing well.
- Although test results are normally not released to the public until there is confirmation, these preliminary results are being released given the current circumstances.
- Anthrax is not contagious from one person to another.
- Cutaneous (skin) anthrax is different from inhalation anthrax, which is the type of anthrax that resulted in the death of one person in Palm Beach County, Florida. A cutaneous infection due to anthrax can occur if the spores are in contact with an area of skin that is not intact, such as a cut or sore. Cutaneous anthrax is marked by a boil-like lesion that eventually forms an ulcer with a black center. The cutaneous form responds well to antibiotics if treatment is started soon after symptoms appear, such as in this case.
- Selected areas of 30 Rockefeller Plaza have been closed, and environmental samples are being taken.
- The risk of exposure is greatest for the few people who handled the letter **after** it was opened, or those in the **immediate** area at the time the envelope was opened. Nevertheless, as a precaution, all people who worked on the third floor will be given antibiotics.
- CDC is supplementing a New York City Health Department team of epidemiologists investigating the case. CDC has provided personnel and is supporting New York with laboratory assistance and antibiotics, if needed.
- For more information regarding public health actions being taken in New York City, press can contact the NY City Health Department by calling 212-295-5335/5336. The public can call 1-877-817-7621 or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health).

- To contact CDC, call 404-639-3286.
- For information about how to handle suspicious mail, see the US Postal Service website at:  
[www.usps.com/news/2001/press/pr01\\_1010tips.htm](http://www.usps.com/news/2001/press/pr01_1010tips.htm)